

1980

Review of Applied Urban Research 1980, Vol. 08, No. 06

Center for Public Affairs Research (CPAR)
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/cparpubarchives>

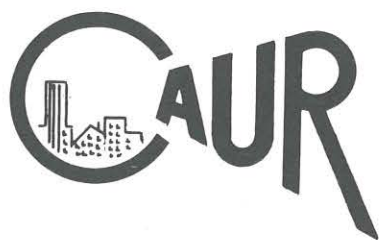
 Part of the [Demography, Population, and Ecology Commons](#), and the [Public Affairs Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

(CPAR), Center for Public Affairs Research, "Review of Applied Urban Research 1980, Vol. 08, No. 06" (1980). *Publications Archives, 1963-2000*. 463.
<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/cparpubarchives/463>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for Public Affairs Research at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Publications Archives, 1963-2000 by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.





University of Nebraska at Omaha

REVIEW

of

APPLIED URBAN RESEARCH

VOLUME VIII

Number 6

DOWNTOWN HOUSING STUDY

Interests, Preferences of Central Business District Employees

By Joan V. Holley and R. K. Piper

(Dr. Holley is a research/community development assistant and Mr. Piper a graduate assistant on the CAUR staff.)

A 15 PERCENT POPULATION GAIN in suburban areas and a 4 percent population loss in the central cities between 1970 and 1980 was reported in the preliminary 1980 Census data.¹ Vincent B. Barabba, director of the Census Bureau, has stated that a back-to-the-city movement has had a negligible impact on declining cities and will not affect cities much in the future.² However, the quantity of recent articles on urban housing in professional journals and popular magazines, as well as feature stories by the mass media, would indicate an increasing interest by Americans in living in or near downtown.

Recent action by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) indicates that a migration to the cities and urban redevelopment already have had an impact on cities across the country. HUD has awarded contracts to research firms to determine the extent of the displacement of low-income and elderly urban residents by more affluent inner-city newcomers and by public and private development.³ A research firm also is working with HUD to develop anti-displacement strategies for four specific American cities.⁴ The February/March, 1980 publication of *Urban Concerns* was devoted to the displacement of inner-city residents by "urban pioneers" or "urban immigrants."

Other related programs and actions affecting urban housing recently examined in national journals include: the projects of the Urban Homesteading and Community Development Block Grant programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the conversion of

landmark and other older buildings into new urban uses, the Historic Districts and National Register of Historic Places programs of the Department of the Interior, the restoration of older homes by new owners, the self-help work done by inner-city neighborhood organizations to preserve and enhance their own communities, and the downtown revitalization programs of city governments.

The interest in determining the dimension of a possible local back-to-the-city movement is indicated by recent features in Omaha media. Reporters have interviewed Omaha city officials, inner-city neighborhood residents, real estate and development specialists, bank officers, and university researchers. These investigations have been reported in the May, 1980 issue of *Omaha* magazine, the August 10 *Omaha World-Herald*, and a KYNE program on November 3, 1980.⁵

Need for Downtown Housing Market Information

With this increased local and national interest in urban housing, the higher costs of transportation, and the city redevelopment projects progressing in downtown Omaha, inquiries by local and outside investors and developers about the demand for housing in downtown Omaha also have increased. Among those contacted about the availability of this information have been the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, departments of city government, and universities. When explaining the problem of financing downtown housing projects, Omaha City Planning Director Alden Aust recently stated, "There is also not a lot of market experience—nobody knows the depths of characteristics of the market. Without that information, the lending agencies are handicapped."⁶

In the summer of 1980, the Omaha Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) asked the Center for Applied Urban Research to conduct a study to determine the interest and preferences in housing in the Omaha Central business district. Specifically, HCD wanted information about the extent of interest in living downtown, the characteristics of the persons who would like to live downtown, the type and price of housing preferred, and in which part of downtown these persons would choose to be located.

CAUR did a study of the downtown housing interests of city and county employees in 1977. However, a limitation of this study was that the extent to which the attitudes of these public employees represented the attitudes of all downtown workers was not known. Also, downtown housing market information now being requested was not obtained in the earlier study. Thus, the research for HCD reported here was done in September and October of 1980 to answer these additional questions.

The Population and Sample

The assumption was made that persons working in the central business district would be more interested in living downtown than persons working in other parts of Omaha. Therefore, the population for the study consisted of employees of downtown organizations.

HCD identified the boundaries for the study: north—Interstate 480, south—Leavenworth Street, east—the Missouri River, and west—Interstate 480. *The Directory of Major Employers for the Omaha Area*, compiled by the Omaha Economic Development Council of the

Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, was utilized as the employer sampling frame. All the firms that employed 400 or more persons and were located within the downtown boundaries were identified from this publication.

The sample for the study consisted of randomly selected employees of these firms to represent the population of persons working in downtown Omaha, including both white- and blue-collar workers. To involve approximately 300 persons in the study and allow for non-respondents, CAUR estimated that 385 names should be secured from the employee lists. However, 347 persons returned completed questionnaires, a response rate of 90 percent.

Interest in Living Downtown

The employees of downtown organizations were asked, "If new residential facilities were constructed in downtown Omaha, how interested would you be in living downtown?" About one-fourth of the participants in the study (27 percent) expressed an interest. Of these respondents, 6 percent were very interested in being an urban resident, and 21 percent were somewhat interested. Given sampling errors based upon the sizes of the samples, this proportion of 27 percent is not significantly different (statistically) from the 1977 findings that 35 percent of the city/county employees working downtown were interested in living there.

Seventy-nine percent of the respondents who were interested in downtown housing indicated that the primary reason was to reduce the cost and time in commuting to work. Fourteen percent indicated that their interest was motivated by a desire to be closer to special facilities such as the Joslyn Art Museum, the Orpheum, or the City Auditorium. Seven percent wrote in "other" reasons for their interest in downtown living. These included the energy problem and a desire for cultural growth. Respondents also wrote: "Downtown could be a 'classy' place to live," "Comforting to know dependent on no other power to get me to work," "After the redevelopment of downtown, would enjoy being closer in," and "Hoping river area would be developed as mentioned in long-range plans."

Persons living within the Omaha city limits were more interested in downtown housing than persons who commuted from outlying areas. Only 14 percent of those living outside the city limits expressed an interest in downtown living, compared to 33 percent of those living in the city limits. Within Omaha, those

TABLE 1 INTEREST IN DOWNTOWN HOUSING WITHIN EACH DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP			
	Interested %	Not Interested %	Total Number
<u>Present Location</u>			
East of 72nd	35	65	124
West of 72nd	31	69	106
Outside city limits	14	86	111
Total			341
<u>Sex</u>			
Male	25	75	209
Female	29	71	133
Total			342
<u>Age</u>			
Less than 25	42	58	38
26-35	23	77	112
36-45	26	74	95
46-55	26	74	54
56-65	23	77	43
Over 65	0	0	0
Total			342
<u>Marital Status</u>			
Single	38	62	53
Married	21	79	257
Divorced	56	44	27
Total			337
<u>Children</u>			
Have children under 16 years	22	78	145
No children under 16 years	29	71	194
Total			339
<u>Education</u>			
Less than 12th grade	29	71	14
High school	24	76	102
Some college	29	71	128
College degree	25	75	77
Advanced degree	27	73	22
Total			343
<u>Annual Household Income</u>			
Less than \$10,000	33	67	18
\$10,000-\$20,000	29	71	85
\$20,000-\$30,000	30	70	115
\$30,000-\$40,000	19	81	72
Over \$40,000	23	77	43
Total			333

living east of 72nd Street were slightly more interested than those west of 72nd Street (35 percent and 31 percent, respectively).

Women working in the core area appeared to be slightly more interested in downtown living than men: 29 percent of the women participants in the study expressed an interest compared to 25 percent of the men. Persons 25 years old and under were the age group most interested in central city living, with 42 percent responding positively. In the 36 to 45 year age group, 26 percent of the respondents were interested in downtown living, and in the 46 to 55 age range 26 percent said that they were interested. Least interested were persons in the 26

to 35 and 56 to 65 age divisions, each with a 23 percent interest rate. Table 1 shows the percent of interest in each of the demographic categories.

Divorced downtown employees, with a 55 percent interest rate, were the marital group that expressed the most interest in living in the city core area. Single respondents (38 percent interest) were more amenable to the idea of downtown living than married respondents (21 percent interest).

The presence of children in the home or the educational attainment of the respondents did not appear to affect significantly the respondents' interest

in residing in the central city. Twenty-two percent of persons with children under 16 and 29 percent of the employees without school-age children were interested in downtown housing. Between 24 and 29 percent of the study participants at all educational levels were interested in living downtown. These percentages were close to the 27 percent of downtown employees who said that they were interested in living downtown in response to the initial question on the survey instrument.

When the respondents were grouped according to salary, the two groups indicating the most interest in living downtown were those receiving an annual wage of less than \$10,000 (33 percent interest) and those making between \$20,000 and \$30,000 a year (30 percent interest). Twenty-nine percent of the respondents earning between \$10,000 and \$20,000 were interested. In the highest income category, over \$40,000 a year, 23 percent expressed an interest in being located downtown. The income group having the lowest percentage of persons interested was the \$30,000 to \$40,000 division (19 percent).

When the demographic characteristics of the respondents interested in downtown housing were considered, rather than the interest within each demographic group, additional information was obtained. (See Table 2.)

A little over one-fourth of the downtown workers interviewed said they would be somewhat or very interested in living downtown, while about three-fourths said they would not.

Fifty-seven percent of the respondents indicating an interest in living downtown were men, and 43 percent were women. Twenty-nine percent of those interested were between 26 and 35, and 28 percent were between 36 and 45. The fewest respondents interested in urban center living were in the 46 and over groups and the 25 and under category.

Of the persons finding downtown attractive as a residential area, 41 percent were in the "some college" educational category. Other findings about the educational attainment of these respondents were: 28 percent completed high school only, 21 percent had a college degree, 7 percent had advanced degrees, and 4 percent had not completed high school.

A \$20,000 to \$30,000 salary was earned by 38 percent of the employees

TABLE 2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS INTERESTED AND NOT INTERESTED IN DOWNTOWN HOUSING			
	Interested (27 percent of sample) %	Not Interested (73 percent of sample) %	Percent of Sample %
<u>Present Location</u>			
East of 72nd	47	32	36
West of 72nd	36	29	31
Outside city limits	16	28	33
Total	99	99	100
<u>Sex</u>			
Male	57	62	61
Female	43	38	38
Total	100	100	99
<u>Age</u>			
Less than 25	18	9	11
26-35	29	34	33
36-45	28	28	28
46-55	15	16	16
56-65	11	13	13
Over 65	0	0	0
Total	101	100	101
<u>Marital Status</u>			
Single	22	13	16
Married	59	81	75
Divorced	16	5	8
Total	97	99	99
<u>Children</u>			
Have children under 16 years	36	45	43
No children under 16 years	64	55	57
Total	100	100	100
<u>Education</u>			
Less than 12th grade	4	31	4
High school	28	31	30
Some college	41	36	37
College degree	21	23	22
Advanced degree	7	6	6
Total	101	100	99
<u>Annual Household Income</u>			
Less than \$10,000	7	5	5
\$10,000-\$20,000	28	25	26
\$20,000-\$30,000	38	33	34
\$30,000-\$40,000	16	24	21
Over \$40,000	11	14	13
Total	100	101	99

interested in downtown living. Twenty-eight percent earned between \$10,000 and \$20,000, and 16 percent were paid between \$30,000 and \$40,000 annually. In the highest income category, over \$40,000, were 11 percent of the interested respondents, and in the lowest division, under \$10,000, were 7 percent of these downtown employees.

Housing Preferences

Townhouse units were preferred by more than one-third of the persons interested in living downtown (36 percent). Twenty-nine percent expressed a

preference for single-family detached units, and 20 percent chose apartments. Eleven percent indicated that they would like cluster houses. About one-half of those interested in downtown housing would prefer new housing (49 percent), and about one-half (51 percent) would like to live in older/converted housing. (See Table 3.)

When asked about their preferences for the number of bedrooms in a downtown living unit, 50 percent replied that they would like two bedrooms, 36 percent would choose three or more, and 13 percent indicated a preference for a

one-bedroom housing unit. Two percent of the respondents would like to live in a studio apartment.

Two-thirds of the persons interested in living downtown would prefer to own their own housing units, while one-third would prefer to rent.

The downtown employees were asked, "How much would you be willing to pay a month for downtown housing?" The \$225 to \$275 a month price range was selected by one-fourth of the respondents who were interested in living downtown. Preferring the \$175 to \$225 range were 20 percent, and 19 percent selected \$325 to \$400 monthly. Fifteen percent of the respondents indicated that they would prefer to pay between \$275 and \$325 a month.

Fifteen percent of the sample selected the highest housing price range category of more than \$400 a month. The monthly payment chosen by the fewest number of respondents was the lowest housing cost of between \$125 and \$175 a month, with 6 percent of the respondents preferring to pay this amount.

Of those interested in living downtown, 82 percent expressed a preference for living in a particular part of downtown, and 18 percent indicated that they did not have an area preference. The river-front area was perceived as being the most desirable place to live by about one-third of the persons who preferred a specific downtown housing location (36 percent). Living in the Old Market area appealed to one-fourth of these respondents, and 14 percent would choose to live in the core area.

Three other areas were selected by persons who would be interested in living downtown: the area northwest of the Joslyn Art Museum by 9 percent, the southwest area near the Flatiron Building by 8 percent, and the Park East area by 7 percent of the study participants. Although the warehouse district was listed on the survey instrument as being one of the downtown choices, no one chose that area.

Disinterest in Living Downtown

The central business district employees who gave negative answers to the initial question about their interest in living downtown (73 percent of the sample) were asked, "What is your primary reason for not being interested in living downtown?"

One-third of these persons gave the

non-specific answer that they preferred another area, such as the suburbs, the country, or a particular neighborhood or community. Home ownership in another area deterred 13 percent of the participants from expressing interest in downtown housing.

In addition to these reasons, crime, and unsafe conditions were identified as the reason for not being interested in downtown living by 13 percent. With the lack of personal and property safety, respondents often mentioned the undesirables on the Omaha streets. Some downtown employees wrote: "The crime in downtown Omaha intimidates me," "Not safe for elderly during the day, and unsafe for everyone at night," and "Not a safe area to be in after 8 p.m. for a family."

Respondents specifically mentioned prostitutes, procurers, alcoholics, and vagrants. Some of the expressions of this reason for not being interested in downtown living were: "The weird people—winos—that lurk around the downtown area," "The class of people roaming the street after 5:00," and "Lots of undesirables hanging around."

Eight percent perceived that the downtown environment was not conducive to raising children. Crowding, congestion, traffic, and noise were found as objectionable downtown situations for 7 percent of the respondents who did not want to live downtown, while 6 percent said that too few supermarkets and other shopping opportunities made downtown an undesirable place to live.

The appearance of downtown was given by 3 percent of the sample as a reason that they did not want to live there, with some of these respondents describing the area as "run down," "dirty," or "slum-like." Three percent of the downtown employees also stated that they preferred an area that had schools that were safer, better, or did not have busing.⁷

Making Downtown A Desirable Place to Live

The 254 study participants who expressed reasons for not being interested in living downtown were asked: "What conditions could occur in downtown Omaha that would make it a desirable place for you to live?" Even with changed conditions, 118 persons (46 percent) replied that they would not live downtown. Examples of their responses

TABLE 3 HOUSING PREFERENCES OF RESPONDENTS INTERESTED IN LIVING DOWNTOWN		
	%	N
Type of Housing Preferred		
Apartment	20	19
Loft or warehouse	11	10
Townhouse	36	33
Cluster house	4	4
Single-family detached	29	27
Total	100	93
Number of Bedrooms		
Studio apartment	2	2
One	13	12
Two	50	46
Three or more	36	33
Total	101	93
New or Old Housing		
New	49	43
Older or converted	51	45
Total	100	86
Rent or Own		
Rent	34	31
Own	66	61
Total	100	92
Monthly Payments		
\$125-\$175	6	5
\$175-\$225	20	18
\$225-\$275	25	23
\$275-\$325	15	14
\$325-\$400	19	17
Over \$400	15	14
Total	100	91
Preference of a Specific Area		
Yes	82	76
No	18	17
Total	100	93
Specified Area		
Old Market	25	19
Downtown core	14	11
Northwest of Joslyn	9	7
Park East	7	5
Warehouse district	0	0
Riverfront	36	27
Southwest near Flatiron Bldg.	8	6
Other	1	1
Total	100	76

included: "I don't like large metropolitan areas, and I don't believe I could ever be happy living in one," "I just don't like city living," and "I live in Council Bluffs and have all my life." Six persons (2 percent) said that an occurrence in their own lives, such as the loss of a spouse, children maturing and leaving home, or retirement, would alter their attitudes toward downtown living. Specific changes in the core area that could make it a desirable place for them to live were listed by 130 respondents (51 percent).

Forty-nine of these responses about changes (38 percent) related to improved

protection and increased personal and property safety. Respondents wrote, "Make it safe for women and kids to walk and shop," and "If it were safe to walk on the streets, I'd live there." Two respondents suggested police surveillance on foot as well as in vehicles. Again, the undesirables were mentioned: "Clean up the area and discourage riff-raff from being around," "Comb out the low life," and "Find somewhere else for the bums, non-working, and unpleasant people to go." Twenty-eight persons (22 percent) identified this change as being necessary to increasing their desire to live in the core area.

Revitalization and redevelopment of downtown was named by 18 persons (14 percent). Some recommended returning downtown Omaha to its previous state, with comments such as "...replace the downtown area as it was in the past (1940's)." Fourteen persons (11 percent) recommended the removal of dilapidated structures and the renovation of existing buildings in downtown. Thirteen persons (10 percent) said they would be interested in living downtown if there were a general clean-up of streets and litter.

The most wanted downtown change for eight respondents (6 percent) was the addition of parks, open spaces, and recreational areas. Six persons (5 percent) would move downtown if there were increased parking facilities. Four persons (3 percent) each said that less congestion and noise, the reduction or elimination of vehicular traffic, or the improvement of the Omaha school system would increase the residential appeal of downtown Omaha. Three persons (2 percent) perceived that a greater variety of jobs and businesses were important to the area. Others mentioned reduction of pollution, improvement of the mass transit system, increased entertainment opportunities, removal of the pigeons, and the provision of property tax incentives for persons living downtown.

Perceptions of Downtown Omaha

Ninety-two percent of those participating in the study indicated that a vital downtown area is important or very important to Omaha, while 8 percent of the sample said that it was not important. (See Table 4.)

Although downtown employees indicated that a vital downtown area is important, 69 percent disagreed or

TABLE 4 PERCEPTIONS OF DOWNTOWN OMAHA					
	Not Important %	Important %	Very Important %	Total %	(N)
How important is a vital downtown area to Omaha?	8	48	44	100	336
	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Total % (N)
Downtown Omaha is a vital area	3	28	45	24	100 336
Downtown Omaha is a deteriorating area	25	49	24	2	100 336
Downtown Omaha is a redeveloping area	8	54	32	5	99 333

strongly disagreed with the statement that the central business district now is in that condition. Thirty-one percent perceived that the city center now is a vital area.

Seventy-four percent of the downtown employees in the study agreed that downtown Omaha is a deteriorating area with 25 percent of respondents strongly agreeing. Disagreeing with the statement were 24 percent of the employees, and 2 percent strongly disagreed.

Perceiving the core area as a redeveloping area were 62 percent of the respondents with 8 percent of all respondents strongly agreeing. Thirty-seven percent of the sample disagreed, with 5 percent of the respondents strongly disagreeing.

Improvements Needed

All of the study participants, both those interested and not interested in downtown housing, were asked: "What do you think should be done to improve downtown Omaha, and who should make these improvements?"

The 347 survey respondents gave 34 different answers. Improving retail shopping opportunities was listed by 120 of the participants (35 percent). Twelve of these persons recommended developing a major shopping center. Several said that department stores should be established downtown, and others mentioned discount and grocery stores. Also mentioned were an ethnic food and goods center, craft shops, a new store in the Brandeis building, the conversion of large buildings such as warehouses into shopping bazaars, establishment of shops and dining places to compete in quality and price with those in suburban Omaha, and expanding the Old Market area. Also mentioned was the need for specialty boutiques, ice cream shops, and many

other specific types of stores.

Increased and improved parking was mentioned second most frequently as a needed positive change in downtown with 97 downtown employees (28 percent) identifying this improvement as being important. Suggestions included: providing more employee and customer parking, eliminating parking meters, providing free parking lots, and constructing more closed parking garages. Several persons mentioned establishing a park-and-ride program, with one recommending that there should be no charge for either outlying parking or for shuttle service to downtown.

Improved safety and better police protection were mentioned by 84 downtown employees (24 percent), and removing the undesirables was listed by 66 persons (19 percent). The study participants specifically recommended, "Getting the bums off the downtown streets" and "Move the street walkers and muggers." One suggested, "Maybe move the Open Door Mission away from downtown."

Seventy-one persons (20 percent) wanted to increase the opportunities for entertainment and recreation, as well as the number of restaurants, activities, and cultural and community programs. Several mentioned the need for an ice skating rink. Also specifically suggested were more sporting events, water front activities, bicycle and jogging paths, new theaters, converting the Omaha Athletic Club into a recreational center, more "night life" and restaurants around the Orpheum Theater and Civic Center, a park with playground equipment, tennis courts, and a bowling alley. The complete list of suggestions for improving downtown and the number of respondents mentioning each are presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5 WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO IMPROVE DOWNTOWN OMAHA?	
Recommended Improvement	Number
Increase retail shopping	120
Improve parking situation	97
Improve safety and police protection	84
Increase entertainment, recreation, cultural, and community programs	71
Remove undesirables	66
Attract more businesses, jobs, and conventions	66
Renovate existing structures	56
Increase available housing	51
Remove dilapidated buildings and replace	44
Clean up and remove litter	33
Increase open and green spaces, parks, and plantings	22
Provide tax breaks and incentives	15
Complete Riverfront and Marina areas	14
Complete Central Park Mall	13
Improve appearance of downtown	12
Improve mass transit system	11
Repair sidewalks and streets	10
Reduce or eliminate downtown traffic	9
Improve downtown street lighting	7
Construct skywalks between buildings	5
Promote downtown	4
Remove pigeons	4
Improve access to downtown	4
Improve Omaha Public Schools	3
Increase number of persons living downtown	3
Legalize prostitution and gambling	2
Rezone to eliminate mixed uses	1
Improve downtown library	1
Create downtown luxury area	1
Halt urban sprawl and westward growth	1
Reduce pollution	1
Remove factories	1
Establish tourist camper site near I-80	1

Many of the respondents detailed their recommendations. One suggestion to improve the appearance of downtown was, "Brighten up the area with statues, fountains, and colors." Another said, "Tear down a block of old buildings and build a park." Several were influenced by positive impressions of other downtown areas: "Create a mall-type atmosphere... similar to Minneapolis," "Revitalize along the lines of Atlanta," and "I feel something like the Seville Square which they did in Kansas City would be very effective."

Respondents were asked to list the organization recommended to make the change after each suggested improvement. The Omaha city government was mentioned 366 times, with private enterprise listed 246 times. The Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce was recommended as the group to initiate the improvements 15 times, and the state and federal governments were each identified nine times. Downtown employers were specifically listed five times and the Douglas County government was identified as the group to be involved in needed changes three times. Churches, charities, or foundations also were listed three times.

Conclusions and Implications

About one-fourth (27 percent) of the 347 downtown employees participating in the study said that they would be interested in living downtown if adequate housing were available. Projecting this 27 percent of the sample to the population of downtown employees, estimated to be between 30,000 and 35,000, would yield approximately 6,690 to 11,095 prospective downtown tenants or owners of housing units.^{8, 9}

Saving the cost and time in commuting to work was listed by 79 percent of the persons interested in living downtown as the primary reason for their interest. Twenty-nine percent of the women expressed an interest in living downtown Omaha compared to 25 percent of the men. (See Table 1.) Persons under 25 comprised the age group that indicated the most interest in living downtown (42 percent compared to 23 percent of the persons between 25 and 35). Divorced (56 percent interest) and single persons (38 percent interest) would like to live downtown more than would married downtown employees (21 percent interest).

Examining the demographic characteristics of the respondents interested in downtown housing, rather than the interest within each demographic group, resulted in additional findings. (See Table 2.) The majority of persons interested in downtown housing were male (57 percent), married (59 percent), did not have children under 16 (64 percent, and lived within the city limits of Omaha (83 percent). More interested persons were in the 26 to 35 age group (29 percent) and in the \$20,000 to \$30,000 annual salary range (38 percent) than in any of the other categories of age and income.

Townhouse units were the type of housing preferred by about one-third of the persons interested in living downtown, and half of the respondents expressed a preference for a two-bedroom unit. Two-thirds of these persons would prefer to own their own housing units, and a \$225 to \$275 a month rent or mortgage payment was chosen most often (25 percent). The riverfront area was identified as a desirable downtown residential location by the most respondents (36 percent).

About one-half of the persons not interested in downtown housing said that their disinterest was because of preferring another area, already owning a home in another area, or having their interests, activities, or friends elsewhere. However, all the other respondents expressing disinterest in living downtown identified specific problems of the central business district as being their primary reasons for not wanting to move into the area. The situation mentioned by the most respondents was perceived crime and unsafe conditions in the city center. With this deterrent to downtown living, the employees also mentioned the undesirables on the streets. Listed most often as a condition that could occur to make downtown a desirable place for them to live was increased police protection with increased personal and property safety.

City planners and others concerned with the redevelopment of downtown Omaha can find support for their efforts in the findings of this study. Ninety-two percent of the sample indicated that they perceived that a vital downtown area is important to Omaha.

However, a majority said that downtown is not now a vital area. When asked whether they perceived downtown

as a deteriorating or a redeveloping area, 74 percent indicated it is deteriorating, and 63 percent said that the core area is redeveloping. (See Table 4.)

When all the participants in the study were asked what could be done to improve downtown, 34 different answers were given. Mentioned by the most respondents were increasing the retail shopping opportunities, providing more downtown parking, and increasing personal safety through increased police protection. Also recommended were expanding opportunities for entertainment and recreation downtown and removing the undesirables from the area. City government and private enterprise were identified by the most respondents as being the groups to bring about these changes.

NOTES

¹Presentation by Gerald O'Donnell, data user services officer at the U.S. Bureau of the Census, at the Census Use Conference, Kiewit Conference Center, Omaha, Nebraska, October 29, 1980.

²Vincent P. Barabba, director of the U.S. Bureau of the Census, quoted in the *Housing and Community Development Reporter*, February 18, 1980.

³Presentation by Rick Cohen, Rick Cohen Research Associates, Jersey City, New Jersey, at the 1980 Conference of the Community Development Society of America, Arcata, California, August 6, 1980.

⁴Telephone interview with Greg Malia, research associate, Rick Cohen Research Associates, October 29, 1980.

⁵Anne Morrow Sampson, "Downtown—Some Day It May Grow Up to be Residence," *Omaha* magazine, May, 1980; Eileen Wirth, "Return to the City," *Omaha-World Herald*,

August 10, 1980; and Bill Scollon, "Omaha Close Up: The Revitalization of Older Neighborhoods," November 3, 1980, broadcast on KYNE-TV.

⁶Alden Aust, as quoted in the May, 1980 issue of *Omaha* magazine, p. 38.

⁷While the initial question was, "If new residential facilities were constructed, how interested would you be in living downtown?" 2 percent of the respondents not interested in living downtown said that the lack of adequate housing was the primary reason for their disinterest.

⁸The approximate number of downtown employees was obtained from Steve Thompson, director of the Economic and Development Group of the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce in a telephone interview, November 17, 1980.

⁹The percent of interest is subject to an error factor of ± 4.7 percent. Thus, an interest rate of 27 percent means a range of 22.3-31.7 percent.

1980 Publications of the Center for Applied Urban Research

Alcohol Prevention in Five Secondary Schools.

Analysis of Girls Club Members.

"An Analysis of the Omaha Apartment Market," *Review*, No. 4.

Career Planning: A Workshop Series for Women.

Community Development for the City of Norfolk, Nebraska.

Day Care Independent Study Program.

"Downtown Housing Study: The Interests and Preferences of Central Business District Employees," *Review*, No. 6. *Educational Needs Assessment and Impact Survey of the Metropolitan Technical Community College.*

"An Examination of Population Changes, 1970-1980," *Review*, No. 3.

"Intra-Urban Household Migration in Omaha, 1976-79," *Review*, No. 4.

The Impact of Leadership Training on the Development of Selected Nebraska Communities.

"Leadership Patterns in Nebraska Communities," *Review*, No. 5.

The Long School Neighborhood: A Community Profile.

Nebraska Program for Technology Transfer: An Operational Framework.

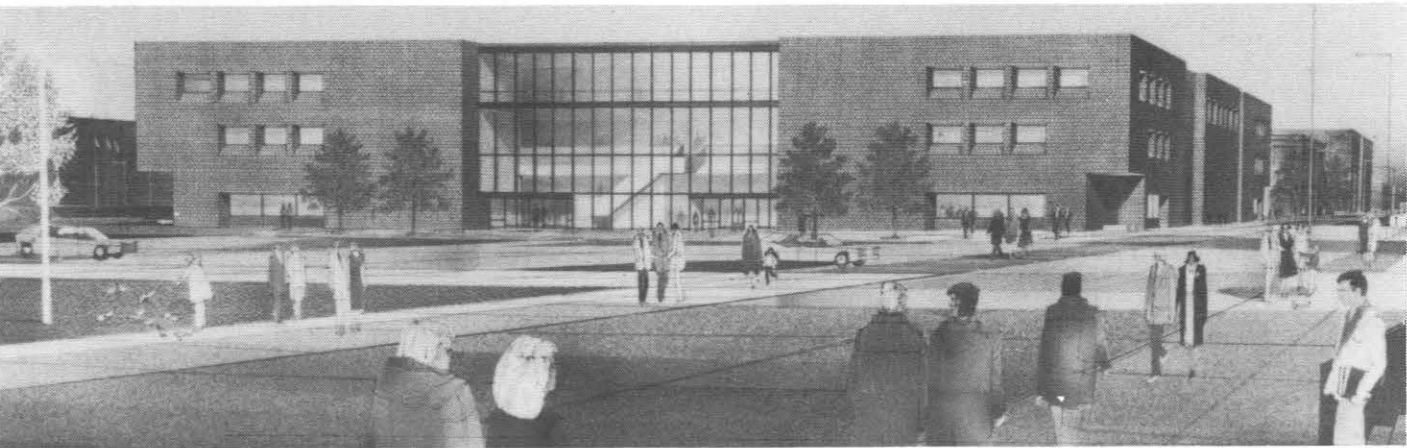
"A Needs Assessment of Older Hispanics," *Review*, No. 1. *Older Hispanics in Nebraska: Their Characteristics, Attitudes, and Needs.*

Practical Skills for Administrators: Early Childhood Program Management Curriculum.

"Saving Fuel and Money Motivates Carpoolers," *Review*, No. 2.

Servicios para Ciudadanos Mayores.

A Study of Alcohol Prevention Grants in the State of Nebraska.



Dedication ceremonies were held December 2 for the new Peter Kiewit Conference Center and State Office Building which houses the Center for Applied Urban Research, other

university offices, and 15 state agencies. The three story structure, built at a cost of \$10,250,000, contains 215,000 square feet of office space. It faces the Central Park Mall at 13th and Farnam in downtown Omaha.

REVIEW OF APPLIED URBAN RESEARCH

Volume VIII

Number 6

Published monthly by the Center for Applied Urban Research as a public service and mailed free upon request in Nebraska. Annual subscription rate outside Nebraska \$3.60.



The University of Nebraska—An Equal Opportunity/
Affirmative Action Educational Institution

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT OMAHA
Delbert D. Weber, *Chancellor*

COLLEGE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE
John E. Kerrigan, *Dean*

CENTER FOR APPLIED URBAN RESEARCH
Vincent J. Webb, *Director*

The views and opinions expressed in the *Review* are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent those of the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Murray Frost, *Research Coordinator*
Jack Ruff, *Coordinator of Housing Research and Community Service*
Genevieve Burch, David R. DiMartino, Paul S. T. Lee, *Senior Research Associates*
Barbara Kendrick, *Project Coordinator*
Carol Ertl, *Curriculum Development Specialist*
Michael T. Eskey, *Senior Research Assistant*
Carole M. Davis, Joan V. Holley, *Research/Community Development Assistants*
Yeshen J. Chen, *Research Assistant*
Marian Meier, *Editor*
Margaret Hein, *Data Base Coordinator*
Joyce Carson, Betty Mayhew, Nancy Whittington, Janet Jensen, *Clerical*

Center for Applied Urban Research
University of Nebraska at Omaha
The Peter Kiewit Conference Center
1313 Farnam on the Mall
Omaha, Nebraska 68182

Address Correction Requested
Return Postage Guaranteed

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U. S. Postage
PAID
Omaha, Nebraska
Permit No. 301